

I am an ordinary American who is strongly concerned about the possibility of further concentration of ownership in the media. As Americans and as believers in democracy, our commitment must be to preserving independent sources of information. I don't believe that can be accomplished when a smaller and smaller number of corporations own a growing percentage of the media. I think of two examples: in the Soviet Union (and in other dictatorships today) the rulers enforce their power and stifle dissent by owning the only newspaper, the only radio and the only television source. I remember in 1993, when my family went to Russia with a choir, how the radio in our hotel had two buttons: on/off, and volume. No dial button was required: there was only one station. I also remember that at our last concert, we gave away our sheet music to America the Beautiful to the audience members. We could have given out copies at every concert, if we had brought them with us. Secondly, I read that in Yugoslavia, after Tito and before the recent war, the state-run radio was used to polarize the public and to aggravate existing ethnic differences. Perhaps the war could have happened without such a concentrated message of pro-Serbian, anti-Croatian sentiments, but the media there contributed its bit to making the war come about. Our media, flawed as they are, are our democracy's lifeblood. With diverse ownership, we have some hope of getting at the truth through a mix of news sources. Please don't give in to the already strong voice of the powerful, and sell us ordinary Americans down the river.